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# Language 'Lived' At Middlebury

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**A** FINE LAD with the likes of Dennis O'Connor for a name reads Pravda. A girl from Virginia stands alone on a hillside spouting French phonetics. Whooping it up in a game of volleyball, a crowd of Americans do their cheering and jeering in pure German. Where in the world are we, anyway?

We're at Middlebury College's world-renowned summer school of languages.

Here in the idyllic beauty of Vermont's Green Mountains, people do more than study languages; they "live" them.

All work is at the graduate level—there are no beginners here.

Once enrolled in the summer school, a student

speaks the language he is studying, and only that language. This is not a relative practice—it is absolute. It is a pledge.

For the Spanish student caught slipping into a conversation carried on in English—"¡Vamos!" For the French student—"Allez-vous en!" For the German scholar—"raus!"

No matter how you say it, it means "out!"

So, everyone toes the line with astounding directness.

## 'Little Worlds'

This raises a host of problems. For instance, when a student doggedly determined to speak only Italian enters a bookstore to make some purchases from a clerk who speaks only Vermont-style "American," it often resembles a small circus.

And there was the case of the husband and wife team who came to Middlebury for the summer course. The husband was a student of one language, his wife another.

Regulations being regulations, domestic tranquility took a back seat. She lived in the dormitory with the girls who were studying her language. He lived in the dorm with the fellows of his linguistic bent.

There are, of course, situations in which special permission is granted for students to revert to English—when, for example, newsmen have a question or two to ask.

As each school has its own classroom, living quarters, and dining accommodations, they have been called "little worlds of their own."

The French school has gone so far as to have its building designed as a chateau.

Occasionally, the desire for "individuality" among the several schools gets a bit out of hand.

There is, for example, the story of the time school "A" requested the administration to prevent school "B" from walking across school "A's" campus en route to and from class.

Said sensitive school "A": "It upsets our mood."

## 'Almost Breathe It'

"Living a language," say the students, "is the only way to become really proficient."

"Unless you think in a particular language—unless you almost breathe it—you don't handle it like a native," declared a member of the student body, a young man from New York State.

He was Don Collier, an electronics student from Tarrytown, currently engrossed in mastering the nuances of German. Literally, Don will soon have to speak the language better than many Germans. It won't be long before he leaves to teach electronics, an overwhelmingly precise subject, to the West German Army.

Talking to oneself is a favorite activity at the



Middlebury Muchacha

Middlebury language schools. There are benches scattered around the campus where one can sit and study as audibly as one would desire.

Nor is it strange for a student to pick out an otherwise quiet hillside and bellow phonetics into the wind with unbridled gusto.

And in order for one to hear and analyze one's handling of a language, there is a building filled with small recording chambers. Here, students chatter away on tape—and play it back.

When we visited the radio building early one morning, we found every one of the rooms in use. We chatted with a Miss Marie Menna, a girl from Philadelphia, brushing up on her Italian. Miss Menna will teach this very musical language soon.

In another booth, Frank Clymer, from College Park, Md., hampered away at Russian. Mr. Clymer is with the United States Government in Washington.

And, in the largest studio of all, we met a muscled, athletic gentleman who turned out to be Samuel Guarnaccia, dean of the Spanish summer school. A former football star and coach, he comes by his rock-iron proportions quite naturally.

## Experiment for Tots

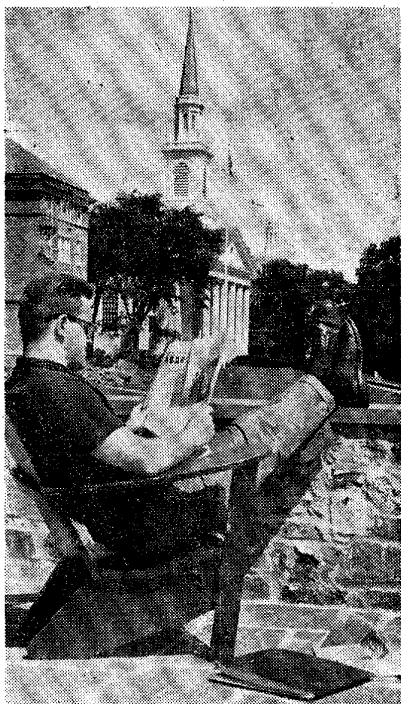
Middlebury, the town, is proud of its college and its language schools.

So much so, in fact, that an experimental class of language for children of early grade-school age is filled to overflowing.

An important aspect of "living" languages is that of extracurricular activities. In addition to the volleyball game played by German students, we found, running at the same time, a folk-singing ensemble of Spanish students and a play in Russian.

Meanwhile, back at the gymnasium, 30 or so students of Russian were actively and precariously engaged in learning hugely athletic peasant dances. Some had achieved proficiency in the leaps, whirls, kicks, and spins. Some had not.

The point is, they were getting needed exercise, enjoying it, and "living" their language to the hilt.



Pravda, Another Point of View

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